

Science, America's Second Priority

Alex Yang

Brentwood High School

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For the last half-century, the United States has been a technological and economic leader in the world. Renowned American scientists have made headlines across the globe, being acknowledged for their accomplishments and their contribution to the fields of science. Lately, however, the importance of science and engineering has been dwindling, being replaced by a pursuit in other careers. Slowly but surely, the United States is losing its dominance as a scientific leader (Kirkpatrick).

Studies have shown that the number of scientists and engineers is declining in regards to the nation's working population (Kirkpatrick). Without a doubt, this is a valid observation. However, although numerous studies and statistics have proved this, in reality there will *always* be a need for scientists and engineers; there won't ever simply be enough of them. These fields are always changing, there is constantly something new to be discovered, a different problem to be solved. Concern has arisen only because the United States has not been a world leader in solving the problems and discovering new concepts (Lemonick). Only if everyone on the face of the earth who is eligible to work was to become a scientist or an engineer would a fraction of the world's problems be solved; logically, that is impossible.

A considerable majority of the students in our school, as far as I know, are not considering pursuing careers in science; the most popular lies in the medical field. In my opinion, there really isn't a "responsibility" to encourage students to become scientists of any type. The decrease in federal funding of basic science research programs indirectly proves this theory (Slowing Down). Overall, it is up to the student on what they wish to

become in the future. Of course, there are going to be many outside influences that determine the student's choice. Many would say that they want to have an occupation that comes with a significant income and so all other outside factors are ignored at the prospect of this. Also, students tend to follow their strengths to decide what career they want to pursue. Therefore, the "public responsibility" is in a sense, nonexistent. Encouragement only goes a certain distance, up to the point where it is ultimately the student's choice on what they want to do.

As for me, the biggest motivation in pursuing a career in science is to make a difference in the world. Unlike many people, I am not trying to pursue a job primarily for its money equivalent. Based on my own ideals and morals, the potential to make a mark on the earth in any way is the most powerful drive I have to pursue a science career. The second reason is the prospect of learning something that can change my life, and perhaps change someone else's also. Knowledge is probably the greatest thing that an individual can possess; the more they possess the more potential they have to make a difference. The world of science is just so incredibly multi-layered, so open to interpretation that it can pull almost anyone with a right mindset into it.

Naturally, with this issue we include politics, government involvement and so on. However, those influences aside, it is ultimately entirely up to the students' intelligence, determination, interests and education that shape his/her future. Public responsibility turns into personal responsibility in this case. The opportunity for change, not fame, knowledge, not money summarizes my motivation in practicing science and engineering. The aspirations of others may be different, but if they feel the decision is best for them, then it is best for everybody.

Works Cited

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